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dedication pays off

Battery Creek High School JROTC cadet
Ronald Wayne accepted into U.S. Naval Academy

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Looking sharp is important. So said 18-year-old Ronald Wayne when he described the goal of his senior JROTC color guard as they prepared to present colors at The Heritage Society of Beaufort's 20th annual luncheon held March 11 on Dataw Island.

His shiny shoes and unwrinkled dress blue uniform reflect the cadet major's concern for his appearance and how people perceive him.

Ronald's motivation and dedication recently earned him acceptance into the prestigious U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., in the fall. As part of his application, Ronald had to receive a nomination from an official source, such as a U.S. senator or representative. After submitting the required forms to academy admissions, Ronald received two nominations: one from U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson and one from President Barack Obama.

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Ronald Wayne received two nominations for acceptance into the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. One from **President Barack Obama** and one from **U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson**.

ON THE WEB

For a video of Ronald Wayne presenting with the JROTC color guard, go to **islandpacket.com**.





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Ronald Wayne, center, part of the of the JROTC color guard from Battery Creek High School, was accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. Also pictured are cadets, from left, Zlake O'Brien and Stephanie Hudson.





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CADET

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His presidential nomination makes Ronald part of an even more elite group. But a thumbs-up from the president doesn't guarantee acceptance into the academy. Only about 100 people who receive presidential nominations each year are accepted into the Naval Academy, said Judy Campbell, Naval Academy spokesperson.

This year, the academy received a record number of applications — as of Feb. 25 there were 17,000. In a typical year, approximately 4,000 candidates receive nominations. And from that number only 1,200 to 1,500 appointments will be given out, Campbell said.

"I was really, really excited when I got the e-mail (saying) that I had been appointed," Ronald said. "I jumped out of my computer chair and was excited that all my hard work paid off. I had to stay focused throughout high school. I had to pull a few all-nighters here and there and I had to prioritize."

Being surrounded by U.S. Marines most of his life influenced Ronald to join the Battery Creek Marine Corps JROTC program as a high school freshman. Ronald's father, Ronald Wayne Sr., served 23 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. Many of their family friends still are active duty or retired from the military.

In addition to Ronald's service as a cadet major in the Battery Creek Marine Corps JROTC, he is assistant drill team commander and serves on the senior color guard. On top of that, Ronald helped found and was a member of the school's inaugural swim team and plays first

chair alto saxophone in the school band.

Physically, Ronald has been preparing for the Naval Academy's Candidate Fitness Assessment throughout high school. He is captain of the track team and has broken two school records — in the pole vault with his 10-foot-6-inch jump and another as a member of the 4-by-800 meters relay team which won the silver medal at state competition with a time of 8 minutes, 12 seconds.

Ronald is referred to as "Major Wayne" by track coach Tyrone Pierce, who says Ronald is regarded as a leader by his teammates.

"His work ethic makes him a good runner," Pierce said. "He's a quiet young man, but he is in charge. When he says it is time to stretch, the students follow him."

JROTC Commanding officer, Lt Col Ziaire O'Brien, 17, smiled when he talked about his close friend.

"This guy is extremely motivated," Ziaire said. "He's always dependable and never lets me down."

His numerous extracurricular activities, two nominations plus his 4.5 grade point average and National Honor Society membership helped give Ronald an estimable application. He also participated in the summer programs at the Naval Academy and at the United States Military Academy at West Point. When he enters the academy as a plebe in the fall, he will have an idea of what it takes to meet the rigorous standards of the military lifestyle.

"You can become a better man, a man of character in the military," Ronald said. "It gives you a chance to see the world. I want to serve my country. You stand for something. I think a man who stands for nothing will fall for everything."